

which is the current policy in most States.

Those ballots would not, under this bill, even have to be mailed in by the voter or dropped in a State-sanctioned ballot box because this legislation legalizes ballot harvesting, which means that mail-in ballots could be collected by paid activists or campaign staffers or anyone who has a stake in the outcome of the election.

It goes so far as to specify that States may not put any limit on how many voted and sealed absentee ballots any designated person can return. It really sounds like an invitation to fraud, and you can see how this could go badly pretty quickly. Maybe the ballot gets turned in with thousands of others. Maybe it is altered. Maybe it ends up in the trash. It is hard to say.

That gets to one of the root problems with this legislation is it does create limitless opportunities for fraud. Every single ballot cast illegally or due to fraud undercuts and neutralizes every legally cast ballot.

One way this bill removes some of the most basic requirements of most States' ballot integrity safeguards against election fraud is by removing any requirement of identification. This was, we should recall, one of the main recommendations of the bipartisan 2005 Commission on Federal Election Reform, cochaired by former President Jimmy Carter and former Secretary of State James Baker III. The Commission recommended that voters should be required to present photo ID cards and that States should provide free cards to voters who did not have a driver's license.

In order to vote in person, most States require voters to produce some valid form of identification. I know mine does. In Texas, there are three options—actually, several options: a driver's license, a passport, a military ID, a citizenship certificate, and other forms of government-issued ID. If, for some reason, you can't obtain one of these forms of ID, there is still a process in place to allow a person to vote by presenting other documents, making sure that they identify the person casting the ballot.

Matching the name of an eligible voter with the name on a valid form of ID is a commonsense safeguard against fraud but one which this legislation seeks to eliminate. If you go to a convenience store and want to buy a six-pack of beer or if you want to buy cigarettes or you want to get on an airplane, you have to present an ID card, but this bill eliminates that requirement when it comes to the most sacred duty and privilege that we have as citizens, and that is to vote.

This legislation stops States from requiring voters to provide proof of identification. Just sign a piece of paper saying you are who you are, and no one can ask any questions. On top of that, this bill would require the States to automatically register anyone in their databases, for everything from DMV to

public assistance programs. Well, we know these databases are not limited to registered voters or even eligible voters. That could include people illegally present in the country because some States allow a driver's license to be issued to noncitizens who are not legally present in the country. These databases include other noncitizens and others not eligible to vote, not to mention the fact that those who are already registered to vote could be registered again and again.

And even if there are duplicate registrations or if someone passes away or moves, States would not be allowed to clean up the voter rolls within 6 months of an election. Just when you think things can't get any crazier, they do.

Our Democratic colleagues are proposing that the taxpayers fund their elections. A lot of companies have a match program for charitable giving. If an employee donates to a charity of their choice, then the company will match that donation dollar for dollar. The same principle applies except, instead of a charity getting the money, under this proposed legislation, it is now a political candidate. Instead of a company footing the bill, it is the taxpayers, and instead of an exact match, it is up to \$6 for every \$1 donated. That means if someone donates 200 bucks to their preferred candidate, Federal taxpayers will wind up coughing up \$1,200.

Well, I think there are a lot of better uses for government tax dollars. They can go to support crime victims or support the response to the humanitarian crisis at the border, which we are experiencing right now. But, no, the proposal in this legislation is, let's use it to elect them.

Then there are the campaign vouchers. This bill creates a new program that provides eligible voters with a \$25 voucher to donate to the campaign of their choosing—again, more government, taxpayer-funded election activities.

I could go on and on.

This legislation also alters the fundamental structure of the Federal Election Commission to remove any need for bipartisanship or consensus building. It undermines trust and accountability in elections. It implements a new financial disclosure policy that even the American Civil Liberties Union says "could directly interfere with the ability of many to engage in political speech about causes that they care about." That is the ACLU.

Above all, this bill amounts to nothing more than a Federal hijacking of State elections. I can promise you, folks in my State don't want Speaker PELOSI or Majority Leader SCHUMER to determine how elections are run in our State. They want accountable leaders in our State, elected by and accountable to them, to determine the best way to conduct free and fair elections.

Following the last two Presidential campaigns, the side that lost had expressed concerns about election secu-

rity. A partisan attempt to overhaul our entire election system is hardly a confidence-building exercise. This bill is not a serious attempt to improve security and accountability in our elections; rather, it is a partisan power grab that will do serious damage to our Republic.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

#### RACISM

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I take no pleasure in coming to the floor today. We in the Senate take pride in our decorum and our sense of comity with each other, so much so that we often twist ourselves into pretzels to avoid saying anything that might be interpreted as a criticism of another Senator. Yet there comes a time when these verbal gymnastics simply won't do. You are either going to speak the truth or fail to do justice to the values you hold dear.

What one of our colleagues said last week about the events of January 6 was felt by many to be racist and hurtful—a stain on the office he is so fortunate to hold.

Look, I get that no one likes to be called racist, but sometimes there is just no other way to describe the use of bigoted tropes that for generations have threatened Black lives by stoking White fear of African Americans and Black men in particular.

On a radio show, our colleague explained that he never feared for his safety during the January 6 insurrection of the U.S. Capitol. But make no mistake, under different circumstances, he would have been afraid. He said:

Now, had the tables been turned—now, Joe, this will get me in trouble—had the tables been turned and President Trump won the election and those were tens of thousands of Black Lives Matter and antifa protesters, I might have been a little concerned.

Is that not racism?

I don't think the Senator is ignorant of the fact that for centuries in this country, White supremacy has thrived on using fear to justify oppression, discrimination, and violence against people of color. I do, however, think my colleague may be ignorant of the pain caused by his comments and unaware of how they compound the trauma that so many still feel in the wake of the events of January 6.

Because I do not think I can do justice to that pain, I want to share with you an email I received this weekend. It is from one of the most devoted public servants I have ever had the pleasure of working with, an African-American member of my staff. His name is Keith Roachford. He has devoted nearly three and one-half decades to serving the people of New Jersey in Congress and his community as a faithful churchgoer and Boy Scout leader. It reads:

Senator,

I would not normally send you an email like this but I am at a loss of how to express

the outrage and hurt I am feeling from the comments made by Senator JOHNSON that he would have been more afraid on January 6th if the insurrectionists would have been from Black Lives Matter.

I am blessed to be on your staff and have had the opportunity to serve as a staff member in the NJ delegation for 34 years, but this is the most painful thing I have ever heard being said by a US Senator.

I could not imagine that the horrible and painful events from [January] 6th could be replicated in a statement from a sitting member of the Senate.

However, Johnson's comment is worse than the image of the insurrectionists walking through the Capitol building with the confederate flag.

He is perpetrating the racist trope that the country should fear black people.

I have experienced what it is like to have a taxi cab pass you by in order to pick up white passengers who are further down the block of where you are standing.

Nothing can describe the feeling when you have entered a store and having store clerks watch your every step while shopping.

Sandy—

That is his wife—

and I have had the conversations with our sons when they were young about how to enter a store; not look suspicious; keep your hands out of your pockets until you make your purchase; or how to respond and talk to police officers in any interaction.

I have had the difficult conversation of explaining to a young black scout in our scout troop why a white campground store clerk accused him of not paying for an item because he was black.

[This] type of hate speech is [not] new. The hardest part of what he said is that in 2021, a United States Senator would so freely express this type of hate out loud.

I am so grateful for our officers who endured so many injuries on [January] 6th, and I pray that they will recover physically and mentally.

They are going through so much right now, I feel guilty that my email to you might sound shallow because of the pain they are trying to overcome.

I understand that the Senate works best when both sides can find common ground, but how do [you] really reach common ground when [such views can be held]?

Again, I am sorry for reaching out late on Saturday evening, but I needed to share this with you.

Keith.

To read these pained words both broke my heart and boiled my blood. Thousands of people of color serve in the U.S. Capitol workforce. They are legislative staffers like Keith and Capitol Police officers and maintenance workers, cafeteria staff, and so much more. I should not have to stand here and remind anyone that many of them feared for their lives on January 6. But not Senator JOHNSON. He felt no fear. He wasn't afraid because, and I quote:

I knew those are people that love this country, that truly respect law enforcement, would never do anything to break the law, so I wasn't concerned.

People who love this country do not desecrate our most sacred democratic institutions and display symbols of racial hatred like the Confederate flag in the halls of Congress. People who respect law enforcement do not assault Capitol Police officers, beat them within inches of death, and hurl ugly epi-

thets at officers of color. And people who would never do anything to break the law would not try to overturn the rule of law, plot to kill elected officials, and stop the peaceful transfer of power as instructed by the Constitution of the United States.

Now, I know what some rightwing media pundits and some of my Republican colleagues will say. They say it every time they are asked to accept some responsibility for perpetuating the lies told by President Trump that inspired the violent events of January 6.

They say: What about Black Lives Matter?

They say: Well, what about it?

Well, I say: Well, what about it?

The violent picture they paint of this movement could not be more divorced from reality. At this point, several reputable studies have confirmed that the protests launched in the wake of George Floyd's chilling murder were overwhelmingly peaceful. I repeat: The Black Lives Matter movement is overwhelmingly peaceful. I know many people don't care about facts these days, but it is the truth.

One study out of Harvard University analyzed 7,305 Black Lives Matter protests. The conclusion? Allow me to quote Professor Erica Chenoweth. She said:

Only 3.7 percent of the protests involved property damage or [some form of] vandalism. Some portion of these involved neither police nor protesters, but people engaging in vandalism or looting alongside the protests. In short, our data suggest that 96.3 percent of events involved no property damage or police injuries, and in 97.7 percent of events, no injuries were reported among participants, bystanders or police.

Likewise, the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project—an organization I might add is partially funded by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations—examined 7,750 different Black Lives Matter demonstrations across the Nation last summer. They found just 3 percent of those protests associated with any violence or property destruction whatsoever. They also concluded that police departments “disproportionately used force while intervening in demonstrations associated with the [Black Lives Matter] movement relative to other types of demonstrations.”

Indeed, on January 6, as we waited for hours for backup from the National Guard and other law enforcement agencies to come to the aid of Congress, I know that I am not the only one who could not help but think of the violent, government-sanctioned crackdowns that met Black Lives Matter protesters last summer.

The bottom line is that these lies casting Black Lives Matter as violent have already done real damage. They have convinced millions of Americans that they should fear those who march under the banner of this movement for justice, when really it is the resurgence of violent White supremacy that should be Americans' real cause for alarm.

Indeed, last October, the Department of Homeland Security issued a report confirming that White supremacists pose the most lethal domestic terror threat to the American people. Research from the Center for Strategic and International Studies finds that White supremacists and their sympathizers carried out two-thirds of terrorist plots and attacks in 2020.

In the weeks since January 6, we have learned that far-right extremist groups that regularly preach White supremacy, such as the Oath Keepers and the Proud Boys, played a major role in plotting and executing the attack on the U.S. Capitol.

Every Member of this body owes their life to the sacrifices made that afternoon by Capitol Police officers, including officers of color. At least 100 officers were physically injured in the January 6 attack. One officer, a veteran and fellow New Jerseyan named Brian Sicknick, later succumbed to the injuries he sustained. Two others subsequently committed suicide. Hundreds of officers now carry with them invisible scars from the trauma they endured that day—scars that may not fade for years or even decades.

For one of our colleagues to cast those who attacked the Capitol as harmless patriots while stroking fear of Black Americans is like rubbing salt in an open wound.

Everybody in this body should know that when you perpetuate such racist tropes, you contribute to a culture that gives people permission to treat Black Americans as suspicious and their lives as expendable. We in the Senate are supposed to hold ourselves to a higher standard. We are supposed to advance America's long march toward a more perfect Union, not coddle and cater to those who would take us backwards, and we are supposed to stand up for the truth. That is what brought me to the floor today.

I hope Members of this body on both sides of the aisle will join me in making sure that we do not debase the institution and the people we are called to serve—all the people—for whom so much pain has existed for years and exists still today.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, on January 20 of this year, President Biden declared the repeal of an emergency action at our southwest border. He withdrew that and said there is no emergency that currently exists there and paused all funding for the border wall system construction—stopped it. Wherever it was that day, it ended that day.

The same day, he announced a 100-day moratorium on deportations in the country—stopped that. Within a few days, the courts stepped in and a Federal court said that you can't just stop actually executing faithfully the laws of the United States. The court halted